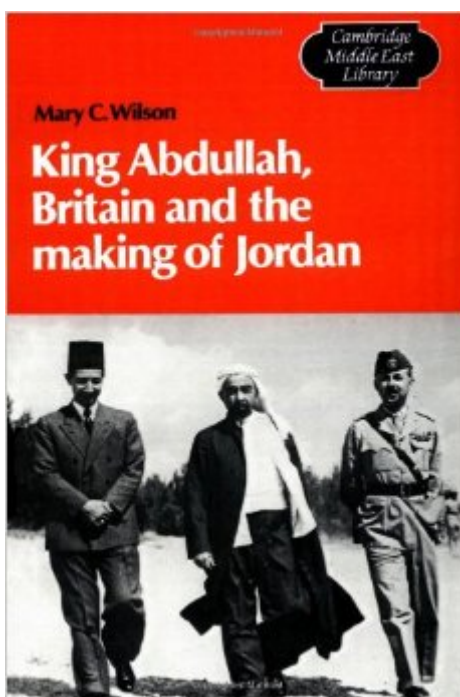


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King Abdullah, Britain And The Making Of Jordan (Cambridge Middle East Library)



Synopsis

Because of his role in the partition of Palestine, King Abdullah has always been one of the most controversial figures in modern Middle Eastern history. This book is the first in-depth description and analysis of the historical and personal circumstances that made him so significant. Abdullah, a son of the Sharif of Mecca and a member of the Ottoman elite, emerged after the First World War as a contender for power in a Middle East dominated by Britain owing to his alliance with Britain in the Arab revolt. To his disappointment, he ended up in the arid territory of Transjordan. Within the constraints of British interests, he was left to make something of his lot. Since Transjordan had little to draw on to resist total dominance by Britain, Abdullah spent the remainder of his life looking for a role, a clientele, or a stable balance of interests that would allow him a future independent of British fortunes. He found all three after 1948 when, in conjunction with the creation of Israel, he came to rule the portion of Palestine known as the West Bank.

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Customer Reviews

After the Europeans liquidated the Ottoman Empire following the first World War, Abdullah's family got booted out of their domain in the southern Arabian peninsula by the victorious Saudi rebels, and his brother wound up as King of Iraq. Abdullah had his own eyes on Syria, but as the English had promised that country to the French, who didn't much care for him, finally the English agreed to slice off the so-called "Transjordan" (now, Jordan) and let him be King of that. According to Mary C. Wilson, he spent the rest of his life looking unsuccessfully for a major role in the region, either in

Syria or in a federation of some sort with Palestine. He did manage in any case to keep the unpromising terrain of Jordan viable as a state, and out of most serious trouble, though he got assassinated by Arab nationalists for his pains (not an unusual fate in that time and place). He is fondly remembered by many as a relatively reasonable man in a relatively unreasonable region. One learns here that he had a reputation for extreme laziness (possibly cultivated), and the author does not consider him a brilliant statesman, though his British "advisors" had an even lower opinion of him. In any case the author, Mary C. Wilson, is in good command of her subject, which is not easy, as it requires familiarity with a number of languages and mastery of a set of distinctly unreliable sources. I found it quite informative. On the other hand, nobody would want to make acquaintance with this region by beginning with Jordan, the least interesting country in the area. If one has a general sense of the main features of the Middle East in the first half of the 20th century, and its basic geography, then this casts an interesting light on the period.

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